HOMELESSNESS, VICTIMIZATION AND CRIME:

Knowledge and Actionable Recommendations

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Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

Un sommaire exécutif suit en français

This report examines how victimization contributes to homelessness and how subsequent victimization may result from living on the streets. It reviews the types of crimes committed by homeless people, and why homeless people are incarcerated. It also identifies factors through which incarceration raises the risk of homelessness for vulnerable populations.

The report identifies the main conclusions from the literature review. It also reports on actionable recommendations from semi-structured interviews held with community safety coordinators, city housing staff, academics, service providers, and community action groups from eight Canadian cities: Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Regina, Calgary, Edmonton, and Vancouver.

Main findings from literature review

In 1998, the mayors of some of the largest cities in Canada declared homelessness a national disaster. Since then, studies conducted in a number of Canadian cities provide evidence that the number of homeless people on the streets is increasing and, consequently, that the demands on shelters and other services can be expected to rise.

The costs of homelessness include expenses associated with shelters, emergency rooms, ambulances, paramedics, social workers, substance abuse treatment, police intervention, and incarceration. These costs continue to increase and some studies have estimated that homelessness costs Canadian taxpayers 1.4 billion dollars each year.

Compared to the housed, homeless people have more often been the victims of physical and sexual abuse as children and victims of family violence and spousal assault as adults. Those without adequate shelter are more likely than the housed to be victims of violence and, for women, victims of sexual assault. They are also more likely to be Aboriginal.

A high proportion of homeless youth have been in custody in child welfare or correctional systems. They are often released without adequate planning for housing. Their history of victimization in the family is rarely addressed.

A high proportion of adult homeless people have been incarcerated. Some are treated without respect by the police. A high proportion suffers from mental disorders and addictions which are not treated in the prison systems. A prison sentence jeopardizes housing arrangements and increases vulnerability to homelessness once released.

Homeless individuals are more likely to engage in criminal activity, and are more likely to be charged with minor property offences, drug offences, and violations of by-laws compared to those with a

fixed address. Homeless people who suffer from addictions are more likely to be involved in drug-related crimes as well as minor property crimes to feed their addictions. They are more likely than the housed to be incarcerated for similar offences.

Actionable recommendations

The semi-structured interviews with municipal policy makers, experts, and practitioners identified several actionable recommendations which are set out in detailed tables on pages 29-33. These identify the specific tasks and roles for different orders of government.

Providing housing, and social and income supports to end homelessness are the best approaches for addressing crime and victimization associated with homelessness, consistent with the Housing First approach advocated by Phillip Mangano and currently being used in some US cities. Large-scale initiatives of this nature require the cooperation and resources of all orders of government. These can be grouped around the following:

1) Housing and supports
- Develop a national Housing First program;
- Provide advocacy and advice for homeless people;
- Increase social assistance and minimum wage; and,
- Invest more resources at all orders of government into strategic tools to measure and reduce homelessness in Canada.

2) Homelessness and victimization
- Improve release mechanisms, support and victim assistance for youth in care;
- Invest in programs to help at-risk youth to stay in school and acquire life skills;
- Improve mental health services for those with persistent mental illness;
- Invest in the prevention of family violence and violence against women; and,
- Educate the public about homelessness.

3) Homelessness and crime
- Provide training for police and other enforcement personnel on best practices for intervention with homeless people;
- Provide non-custodial sentencing options for homeless people;
- Implement comprehensive drug strategies, such as the Four Pillars;
- Develop standards for housing for persons released from custody; and,
- Repeal legislation that excludes youth with behaviour problems from mainstream education.

This synthesis of the research literature and the recommendations are aimed at policy makers in all orders of government to assist in reducing homelessness, victimization, criminal offending, and public disorder.

LES SANS-ABRI, LA VICTIMISATION ET LA CRIMINALITÉ:
ÉTAT DES CONNAISSANCES ET RECOMMANDATIONS POUR LES ACTIONS CONCRÈTES

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Sommaire

Ce rapport examine comment la victimisation peut contribuer au problème des sans-abri et comment le fait de vivre dans la rue peut contribuer à des incidents de victimisation subséquents. Il se penche sur la nature des crimes perpétrés par les sans-abri et sur les raisons pour lesquelles on incarcère les sans-abri. Il met également en lumière certains facteurs contribuant à ce que l'incarcération augmente le risque que certaines populations vulnérables se retrouvent sans-abri.

Le rapport fait état des principaux constats émanant de la revue de littérature. Puis il fait le point sur certaines recommandations pour des actions concrètes, qui se dégagent des entrevues semi-structurées réalisées auprès de coordonnateurs de la sécurité communautaire, d'employés de services de logement municipaux, d'universitaires, de fournisseurs de services et de groupes d'action communautaire de huit villes canadiennes : Halifax, Montréal, Ottawa, Toronto, Regina, Calgary, Edmonton, et Vancouver.

Les principaux constats émanant de la revue de littérature

En 1998, les maires de certaines des plus grandes villes du Canada ont décrété que le problème des sans-abri constituait une catastrophe nationale. Des études menées dans plusieurs villes canadiennes depuis ce temps ont démontré que le nombre des sans-abri dans la rue continue de croître et, conséquemment, on s'attend à ce que la demande croisse également auprès des organismes offrant des services d'hébergement ou autres.

Les coûts afférents aux sans-abri comprennent certaines dépenses liées à l'exploitation de refuges, de salles d'urgence, de services ambulanciers et paramédicaux, d'organismes de service social, de services de traitement des toxicomanies, de même qu'à certaines interventions policières et à l'incarcération. Ces coûts continuent de croître et certaines études ont estimé que le problème des sans-abri entraînait des coûts annuels de l'ordre de 1,4 milliard de dollars pour les contribuables canadiens.

Comparativement aux personnes qui jouissent d'un toit, les sans-abri ont plus souvent été victimes de sévices physiques et sexuels dans leur enfance et victimes de violence intrafamiliale et conjugale à l'âge adulte. Les personnes qui n'ont pas accès à un abri convenable sont plus susceptibles que les autres d'être victimes de violence et, dans le cas des femmes, d'agression sexuelle. Ces personnes sont également plus susceptibles d'être de race autochtone.

Une forte proportion des jeunes sans-abri ont déjà été sous garde des services de protection de l'enfance ou

des systèmes correctionnels. Il arrive souvent qu'ils soient élargis sans qu'on ait planifié adéquatement où ils logeront. Il est rare qu'on aborde l'historique de leur victimisation au sein de leur famille.

Une forte proportion des adultes sans-abri passent par le système carcéral. Certains sont traités sans respect par les policiers. Un fort pourcentage souffre de troubles mentaux et de toxicomanie pour lesquels ils ne reçoivent aucun traitement en prison. Une peine d'emprisonnement risque d'avoir des incidences néfastes sur la situation du logement du détenu et contribue à augmenter la probabilité qu'il se retrouve sans-abri au moment de sa mise en liberté.

Les sans-abri sont plus susceptibles que ceux qui ont une adresse fixe de s'adonner à des activités criminelles, en règle générale des infractions mineures contre les biens, la consommation de drogues illicites et des violations de règlements. Les sans-abri aux prises avec un problème de toxicomanie sont plus susceptibles de s'adonner à des actes criminels liés aux drogues, de même qu'à des infractions mineures contre les biens dans le but de soutenir leur dépendance. Ils sont plus susceptibles d'être incarcérés que ne le sont les personnes ayant un toit, qui commettent des crimes semblables.

Recommandations pour des actions concrètes

Les entrevues semi-structurées menées auprès de décideurs municipaux, d'experts et de praticiens ont permis de dégager plusieurs recommandations pour des actions concrètes; celles-ci sont présentées dans des tableaux détaillés que l'on retrouvera entre les pages 23 et 27. Celles-ci font état des tâches particulières que

doivent assumer les différents ordres de gouvernement ainsi que des rôles qu'ils doivent jouer.

Assurer la disponibilité de logements et offrir des appuis aux plans social et économique pour mettre un terme au problème des sans-abri sont les approches les plus efficaces pour contrer la criminalité et la victimisation qui y sont rattachés, celles-ci étant compatibles avec l'approche *Housing First* (le logement d'abord) prônée par Phillip Mangano et actuellement utilisée dans certaines villes des États-Unis. Des initiatives de grande envergure de ce genre requièrent que tous les ordres de gouvernement collaborent et y consacrent des ressources. Ces actions pourraient s'articuler comme suit :

1) Le logement et les appuis
- Développer un programme national de type *Housing First* (le logement d'abord);
- Offrir des services de représentation et d'orientation à l'intention des sans-abri;
- Augmenter les prestations d'aide sociale et le taux du salaire minimum;
- Investir plus de ressources au développement d'outils stratégiques pour mesurer et atténuer le problème des sans-abri au Canada et ce, par tous les ordres de gouvernement.

2) Les sans-abri et la victimisation
- Améliorer les mécanismes de mise en liberté, d'appui et d'aide aux victimes à l'intention des jeunes sous garde;
- Investir dans des programmes destinés à venir en aide aux jeunes à risque, notamment des programmes de maintien à l'école et d'acquisition d'aptitudes à la vie quotidienne;

- Améliorer les services de santé mentale à l'intention des personnes souffrant d'une maladie mentale persistante;
- Investir en prévention de la violence intrafamiliale et de la violence faite aux femmes;
- Éduquer le public sur la question des sans-abri.

3) Les sans-abri et la criminalité

- Offrir une formation à la police et aux autres forces de l'ordre sur les pratiques les plus efficaces à adopter auprès des sans-abri;
- Prévoir une gamme de peines non carcérales applicables aux sans-abri;
- Mettre en place des stratégies antidrogues globales, telle celle des quatre piliers;
- Développer des normes de logement pour les personnes remises en liberté;
- Abroger les lois qui excluent de l'enseignement ordinaire les jeunes ayant des problèmes de comportement.

Cette synthèse de la recherche et les recommandations qui sont formulées sont destinées aux décideurs de tous les ordres de gouvernement afin d'aider à atténuer le problème des sans-abri, la victimisation, les comportements criminels et le désordre public.

I. INTRODUCTION

Homelessness is a complex, multi-faceted social problem with diverse precursors and risk factors. Through a review of the literature, this report examines the intersections of homelessness and criminal justice in Canada. Specifically, it examines how criminal victimization contributes to homelessness and how subsequent victimization may result from living on the streets. It also includes a review of the most common forms of criminal offending conducted by homeless people, and a synopsis of structural issues that contribute to the incarceration of homeless people. And, it identifies how incarceration raises the risk of homelessness for vulnerable populations.

Following the literature review is a list of actionable recommendations aimed at all orders of government for preventing victimization and offending among homeless populations. The list of recommendations was compiled in consultation with community safety coordinators, city housing staff, academics, service providers, and community action groups from eight Canadian cities: Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Regina, Calgary, Edmonton, and Vancouver.

II. METHODOLOGY

A comprehensive review of literature relevant to the research questions and project objectives was conducted drawing from three main sources:

1. The Library and Academic Databases of the University of Ottawa, and the Institute for the Prevention of Crime (IPC). Both the University of Ottawa and the IPC have extensive electronic access to a wide range of international academic publications. The University's specializations in criminology, population health, community services, and medicine ensure that the library holdings and academic subscriptions span a wide range of sources that consider homelessness from many angles.

2. The specialized database of the Centre for Research on Educational and Community Services (CRECS). CRECS is a research centre located at the University of Ottawa and is dedicated to conducting research and providing training that contributes to the development of effective health and social services for vulnerable populations in the community. It has created an extensive electronic database on research on homelessness and related issues of mental health and service delivery. The database is updated and maintained under the supervision of Dr. Tim Aubry, a senior academic researcher at CRECS whose areas of research interest include homelessness and community mental health.

3. The web sites of several Canadian municipalities were consulted, including Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Regina, Calgary, Edmonton, and Vancouver where reports of Community Task Forces on homelessness were available. Web sites from other research centres were also consulted, such as the Collectif de recherche sur l'itinérance, la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale (CRI), and the Wellesley Institute in Toronto.[1]

These sources provided access to the most up-to-date information on the connections between crime, victimization, and homelessness. The literature was reviewed for information relevant to the research objectives and was compiled into a concise overview. Based on issues highlighted in the literature, actionable recommendations for reducing homelessness and the problems of crime and victimization among homeless people were then drafted.

The second phase of the project involved consultations held via teleconference calls with service providers, municipal housing authorities, and members of the Municipal Network on Crime Prevention in eight Canadian cities (see Appendix A). The purpose of these consultations was to test the conclusions and recommendations that were derived from the literature review. The Municipal Network is comprised of upper-level city officials responsible for developing crime prevention and community safety strategies.

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1   Searches were conducted with Google and Google Scholar search engines combining a wide range of relevant search parameters including: "homelessness", "victimization", "offending", "risk factors", "recommendations", "mental health", "criminal justice", "crime", and many more.

A total of four conference calls were conducted: one with English-speaking members of the Network and housing authorities and one with their French-speaking counterparts, as well as one with English-speaking service providers, and one with those who are French-speaking. These interviews followed a semi-structured interview guide and were based on the following questions:

1. Having read the actionable recommendations proposed by the IPC, what feedback would you like to give?
2. Are there barriers to reducing homelessness in your city?
3. What more could governments (municipal, provincial, or federal) be doing to reduce homelessness in your city?
4. In your opinion, are there municipal, provincial, or federal policies that affect homelessness in your city?

The goal of the interviews was to discuss areas that are relevant to the project objectives with individuals actively working in the field, and to seek input from these groups about the feasibility of the recommendations.

Definitions of homelessness

The way that homelessness is defined and measured varies from one study to the next, making it difficult to gather consistent data or to compare one city to the next (Gaetz, 2004). Furthermore, Canada does not currently have a body of reliable census or national level data on homelessness (Gaetz, 2004). For the purposes of this study, the two categories of homelessness recognized by the United Nations were adopted (UNECE, 2004)[2] :

• Absolute homelessness: These individuals do not have access to physical shelter of their own. They may be sleeping in temporary shelters or "sleeping rough" on the streets in locations not deemed acceptable for human habitation.
• Relative homelessness: These individuals experience hidden or concealed homelessness, living in spaces and shelters that do not meet minimum standards. They may be lacking protection from environmental elements, access to clean water and sanitation, or personal safety.

This literature review will focus predominantly on people experiencing absolute homelessness, those who have no access to shelter of their own.

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2   It should be noted that The Homelessness Partnering Secretariat at Human Resources and Social Development Canada has developed definitions of homelessness which include these two categories, but which also go beyond to include more in-depth information as well as sub-categories.
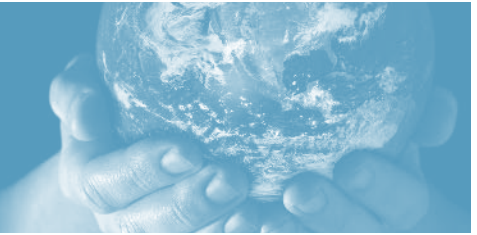
III. A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF HOMELESSNESS IN CANADA

In 1987, the Canadian Council on Social Development made a conservative estimate that there were between 130,000 and 250,000 persons who experienced homelessness annually in Canada (Hewitt, 1994). Since then it is believed that the numbers have risen substantially (Wellesley Institute, 2006). Although there is no reliable national count at present, many cities have undertaken research to assess the magnitude of homelessness in their jurisdictions through needs assessment surveys and single evening "snap-shot" studies (Alliance to End Homelessness, 2006; City of Calgary, 2006; City of Toronto, 2006). The city of Toronto is known as the "homeless capital of Canada" with one study measuring over 30,000 people admitted to shelters annually (City of Toronto, 2004). The Blueprint to End Homelessness in Toronto indicates that homelessness has been growing rapidly in the city, almost six times faster than the overall population (Wellesley Institute, 2006). According to the count of the homeless population in the city of Calgary, the number of homeless rose 32% between 2004 and 2006 (City of Calgary, 2006).

In November 1998, the mayors of some of the largest cities in Canada declared homelessness a national disaster (Wellesley Institute, 2006). Since then research suggests the situation has further deteriorated. Studies in Vancouver, Toronto, and Ottawa anticipate a larger demand on shelter services, and an increase in the number of homeless people on the streets (Alliance to End Homelessness, 2006; Eberle, Kraus, Serge, & Hulchanski, 2001; Wellesley Institute, 2006). In addition, the demographic profile of the homeless population is changing: although the large majority are single men, a growing proportion of homeless people are women, families, youth, and children (Novac, Hermer, Paradis, & Kellen, 2006; Davey, 1998).

The majority of homeless participants in an Ottawa study cited economic difficulties as the primary cause for homelessness. Only 11% of the homeless in the study reported being employed, and inability to pay the rent was a common reason for eviction (Aubry, Klodawsky, Hay, & Birnie, 2003). Rising housing costs and the lack of affordable housing are making this scenario more common. In 2001, Vancouver had over 13,000 people on the waiting list for social housing, and as of March 2006 more than 66,858 households were on the waiting list in Toronto (Homelessness Action Group, 2007).

Aboriginal persons are over-represented in homeless populations across Canada (Aubry et al., 2003; City of Toronto, 2006; Gardiner & Cairns, 2004). For example, Aboriginals represent 1% of the overall population in Ottawa; however, they were disproportionately represented in a survey of individuals staying in emergency shelters (17%) (Aubry et al., 2003). Similarly, in 2006 the City of Calgary reported that 17% of its homeless are

Aboriginal while aboriginals account for 2% of the city's population (City of Calgary, 2006). This overrepresentation is also reflected in the number of homeless Aboriginals sentenced to custody. The City of Toronto's Street Needs Assessment showed that the homeless Aboriginal population was overrepresented in jails, shelters, and public spaces. Aboriginals represent 2% of the population of Toronto but comprised 16% of the study's sample of Toronto's homeless. Seven percent of those incarcerated from the sample were of Aboriginal descent and 26% of rough sleepers were Aboriginal (Novac et al., 2006).

Costs of homelessness

The IBI Group, a multi-disciplinary firm for urban development, estimates that homelessness costs Canadian taxpayers 1.4 billion dollars each year (IBI Group, 2003). This includes the costs of shelters, incarceration, medical expenses, police, emergency room, ambulances, paramedics, social workers, policy work and research, substance-abuse treatment, and other expenses (Gladwell, 2006). A case study of one homeless man in the US, Murray Barr, found that after ten years Murray's bills for hospitals, substance abuse programs, doctors, and police totalled close to one million dollars US (Gladwell, 2006). Although this case is an extreme example, it demonstrates how costly services to the homeless can become if a person's housing needs are unresolved over a long period of time.

Numerous studies show that providing emergency supports such as homeless shelters is more costly than providing the supports to assist homeless people to retain permanent shelter (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2006). This is the premise of the Housing First model currently being promoted for

cities in the United States by Phillip Mangano, Executive Director of the Interagency Council on Homelessness. The Housing First model emphasizes placement of homeless individuals in permanent housing, where they have access to services necessary to stabilize them and keep them housed (Tsemberis, Gulcur, & Nakae, 2004).

Some facts and figures on the costs of providing reactive short-term solutions to homelessness include the following:

- A 2005 study of four Canadian cities found that the annual costs of institutional responses to homelessness such as prison, detention, or psychiatric hospitals ranged from $66,000-$120,000; emergency shelters cost $13,000-$42,000; supportive and transitional housing cost $13,000-$18,000; and, affordable housing with supports costs $5,000-$8,000 (Pomeroy, 2005).
- The Emergency Homelessness Pilot Project in Toronto found the cost of rent supplements ($11,631 per capita annually) to be less expensive than the cost of shelters (Homelessness Action Group, 2007).
- A 2001 BC Study found that taxpayers saved $12,000 per year for every homeless person moved into supportive housing (Homelessness Action Group, 2007).
- The estimated cost savings of providing stable housing to homeless people in Vancouver is 30% (Eberle et al., 2001).
- The cost of new units in non-profit housing per person is lower than various institutional alternatives or the provision of support services to the homeless (Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 1999).

IV. VICTIMIZATION

There is a tendency to focus on crimes committed by homeless people without also examining their heightened vulnerability to victimization, rates that are higher than for the housed (Novac et al., 2006). Victimization is often a precipitating factor for homelessness, and living on the street increases the likelihood of victimization exponentially (Eberle et al., 2001). With this in mind, law and order responses to homelessness can be highly detrimental by further stigmatizing and traumatizing victims of abuse without addressing their needs (Eberle et al., 2001).

Victimization as a risk factor for homelessness

The life histories of homeless persons reveal common shared experiences, including violent victimization, that contribute to their becoming homeless:

- A Toronto study of 300 homeless persons found that 49% of women and 16% of men experienced childhood sexual abuse compared with rates of 13% and 4% in the general population (Mental Health Policy Research Group, 1998).
- High levels of family violence, lack of care, and sexual abuse are common in the histories of homeless persons, suggesting that they may be contributing factors (Bassuk, Perloff, & Dawson, 2001; Herman, Susser, Struening, & Link, 1997). A history of family violence also predicts failure to exit homelessness (Novac et al., 2006).

- In Calgary, 37% of shelter users were physically abused during childhood (Arboleda-Florez & Holley, 1997).
- Involvement of homeless persons with the legal system is positively correlated with family poverty and childhood sexual abuse (Tolomiczenko & Goering, 2001).

Victimization of children, youth, and women

Overwhelmingly, studies of homeless youth reveal that significant proportions have experienced violence in their families of origin. Physical and sexual violence have been described as significant contributors to homelessness, especially for women and youth (Shapcott, 2007). In an Ottawa panel study on homelessness, 50% of homeless youth reported that the reason for their homelessness was family difficulties, including parental eviction, parental conflict, and parental abuse. When asked if they were physically abused by someone close to them, 65% of the study's female participants said they were, as did 49% of males. In the same study, 42% of female youth reported having been sexually abused, 60% of female youth witnessed abuse in their family, and 50% of male youth witnessed abuse of family members (Aubry, et al., 2003)

Additional studies reveal similar patterns. The following childhood factors are commonly reported precursors to homelessness, particularly at a young age:

- High rates of physical and sexual abuse in childhood (Herman et al., 1997; Mental Health Policy Research Group, 1998; Novac et al., 2006; Tanner & Wortley, 2002; Whitbeck, Hoyt, & Ackley, 1997);
- Lack of parental care during childhood (Hermen et al., 1997); and,
- Frequent foster care and other out-of-home placements, which often occur as a result of abuse and neglect (Novac et al., 2006).

Finally, intermediate factors that lead to homelessness may actually be caused by childhood abuse. Abused children typically display developmental delays, poor school adjustment, disruptive classroom behaviour, school-age pregnancy, truancy and running away, delinquency and prostitution, early use and adult use of illicit drugs and alcohol, and suicide attempts. These lead to impaired relationships skills, social isolation and low levels of social support, re-victimization, and self-medication which in turn are all associated with risks for homelessness (Novac et al., 2006).

Victimization also figures prominently in the lives of homeless women. One study estimates that roughly 20% of the adult homeless population are female (Tolomiczenko & Goering, 2001). When women report the process of becoming homeless, they usually describe a combination of interconnecting events and factors, such as domestic violence, divorce, other family disruptions, poverty, and low-income housing shortages (D'Ercole & Struening, 1990; Williams, 1998).

Research suggests that women's housing status is more vulnerable than that of men. In particular, intimate partner violence is a common risk factor for homelessness because women can lose their source of income and their housing when they flee abusive partners (Novac, Brown, & Bourbonnais, 1996). Bassuk and Weinreb (1993) explored pregnancy as a risk factor for homelessness in low income single mothers. They found that stresses related to pregnancy and childbirth can further aggravate a delicate relationship with an abusive partner and young mothers may be forced to leave with no source of income or support. Further results reveal that substance abuse complicates the situation for this group and that when the response to pregnant substance abusers is criminalization, women can be discouraged from seeking help with addictions.

Victimization following homelessness

While a history of victimization contributes to homelessness, victimization is a risk for individuals who are homeless (Fischer, 1992). The principal forms of victimization among homeless people are theft, assault, and shelter violence (Brassard & Cousineau, 2000; Fischer, 1992).

Several studies have found that homeless people are highly victimized:

- The 1992 Toronto Street Health report (Ambrosio, Baker, Crowe, & Hardill, 1992) found that:
  - 46% of women and 39% of men had been physically assaulted in the previous year;
  - 10% of the sample reported being assaulted by police;
  - 43% of women, and 14% men had been sexually harassed in the previous year; and,
  - 21% of the study's homeless women reported being raped.

- North, Smith, and Spitznagel (1994) report that:
  - 10% of the homeless people interviewed in their study had presented to hospital emergency rooms for assault-related injuries; and,
  - Due to high prevalence and frequency of victimization, symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder are common among the homeless population.
- Shapcott (2007) reports that homeless persons in Toronto report physical assault rates significantly higher than the housed population.
- A study of four US cities (Simons, Whitbeck, & Bales, 1989) found that:
  - 50% of the homeless individuals interviewed were victimized;
  - 35% were threatened with a weapon;
  - 25% assaulted with a weapon;
  - 35% were robbed; and
  - 7% were raped.
- In a Toronto study, Hwang (2000) found that homeless males had higher mortality rates than the general population and that homeless men are nine times more likely to be murdered than the general population. In comparison, mortality rates in homeless males in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia were even higher.

Homeless people are also vulnerable to victimization by members of the general public simply for being homeless. Wachholz (2005) has done significant work in this area and refers to these incidents as hate crimes. Further results from Wachholz (2005) reveal the following:

- Such cases often happen within the context of panhandling;
- It is common for offensive comments and insults to be directed at homeless persons, particularly at homeless women who often receive degrading sexual comments and offensive sexual gestures;
- Occasionally harassment of this nature is quite serious: individuals have reported physical assaults from members of the public, have had objects thrown at them from cars and have also been hit or punched;
- Older homeless persons are frequently victimized in this manner; and,
- Women and homeless minorities are disproportionately the victims of hateful speech.

A number of explanations have been offered as to why homeless persons are victimized at higher rates than the general population, such as:

- The homeless lifestyle involves spending large quantities of time in public spaces, in high crime areas, and alone at night (Simons et al., 1989).
- People who conduct illegitimate business on the streets, but who are not homeless – such as drug dealers, loan sharks, and gangs – often victimize homeless persons who are easy targets when they do not pay by deadlines, or simply for fun (Novac et al., 2006).
- High rates of substance abuse among homeless people raise the likelihood of victimization because of greater exposure to high crime areas, and involvement with those in the drug trade (Simons et al., 1989).
- Theft and physical aggression in particular are linked to homeless people carrying all their personal possessions on the person (Novac et al., 2006).
- Victimization of homeless persons, particularly youth, is related to their social exclusion, manifested as restricted access to housing, employment, and public spaces (Gaetz, 2004).

The risk of victimization is higher among homeless persons who live on the street as opposed to in shelters (Hewitt, 1994). Ballintyne (1999) found that 78% of rough sleepers had been victims of crime during their most recent period of sleeping on the street; however, only 21% of these incidents were reported to police. Rough sleepers are more likely to be victims of crime against the person than victims of property crime, including verbal harassment, and threatening behaviour and assault.

Homelessness disrupts important social bonds and impairs personal networking that could be instrumental to getting off the street, and many individuals become trapped in an environment where they will be further victimized (D'Ercole & Struening, 1990). Victimization on the street is psychologically distressing and can lead to depression and low self-esteem, which in turn contributes to apathy and feelings of futility, making it more difficult to escape further abuse (D'Ercole & Struening, 1990; Simons et al., 1989).

Homeless women

Again, the victimization of homeless women is unique within the homeless population as a whole. The following are some aspects of the profile of victimization in homeless women:

- Homeless women are among the most defenceless in society. One-third of homeless women reported experiencing major violence while homeless (Wenzel, Leake, & Gelberg, 2001).

- Some men interpret a woman's homelessness to be a license for sexual abuse (Novac, Brown, & Bourbonnais, 1996).
- Homeless women are more likely to have been sexually abused, raped, and physically assaulted than the general population (D'Ercole & Struening, 1990; Novac et al., 1996).
- Homeless women experience higher rates of both physical and sexual abuse than homeless men (both levels are higher than the general population) (Novac et al., 2006).
- Sexual assaults against homeless women are reported as being more violent and often perpetrated by strangers in public places (Stermac & Paradis, 2001).
- Among a homeless sample in Ottawa, 12% of adult females, 16% of female youth, and 10% of women in families reported a miscarriage due to assault (Aubry et al., 2003).
- Aboriginal women experience a higher rate of family violence and homelessness than non-Aboriginal women (Novac et al., 2006).
- Homeless women who are victimized are more likely to be treated for mental illness or substance abuse (D'Ercole & Struening, 1990).
- Lack of affordable housing for women fleeing family violence may contribute to their decisions to return to abusive spouses (Novac et al., 2006).

V. HOMELESSNESS AND THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Involvement with the criminal justice system is common among the homeless population:

- The 2002 Calgary homelessness study found that 77% of the homeless persons in Calgary had been jailed at some point in their lives (Gardiner & Cairns, 2002).
- A Toronto study with a representative sample of 300 homeless shelter users found that 73% of the men and 27% of the women had been arrested since age 18, and 49% of the men and 12% of the women had been incarcerated at least once (Mental Health Policy Research Group, 1998).
- In a 2003 study in Sudbury, 9% of the individuals interviewed gave "release from prison" as the reason for their homelessness (Kauppi, Gasparini, Bélanger, & Partridge, 2003).

Homelessness as a risk factor for incarceration

Housing and involvement in the criminal justice system are intricately related. Not having a fixed address is a liability when an accused person is charged with an offence and enters the criminal justice system. A study by Clarke and Cooper (2000) of over 472 court appearances by youth in Calgary found that being homeless increased the likelihood of being detained or remanded into custody and of the accused person deciding to plead guilty. A similar study of more than 1,800 hearings in Toronto revealed that people without a fixed address are more likely to be denied bail, and that moral assessments of the accused play a significant role in remand decisions (Kellough & Wortley, 2002). Accused persons who are homeless are often held in custody awaiting trial because justice officials are concerned that they will not appear in court, or maintain contact with probation officers (Eberle et al., 2001).

A study by Metraux and Culhane (2004) based on an analysis of administrative data from prisons and shelters in New York City found that those who were homeless before incarceration are five times more likely to be homeless when released from custody than those who were not previously homeless.

Incarceration as a risk factor for homelessness

Incarceration raises the risk of becoming homeless for vulnerable people. Prior to a court hearing, an accused may be held without bail on remand. In this case it is not possible to continue working, and it may be difficult to maintain the required income to make rent or mortgage payments on existing accommodation. An accused may be held for an undetermined length of time without knowledge of when he or she will be released (Zorzi et al., 2006). Almost half of those in provincial jails are being held on remand awaiting trial and the number of adults on remand has been rising since the mid 1980s (Beattie,

2005). Many of these people exit prisons without a secure place to live, whether or not they have been convicted of a criminal offence.

A prison sentence jeopardizes any housing arrangements offenders may have had. Offenders serving lengthy sentences are especially likely to become isolated from family and community, and lose social connections that may be beneficial in terms of securing employment or housing (Zorzi et al., 2006). It is estimated that as many as 30% of those incarcerated in Canada will have no home to go to upon their release (Eberle et al., 2001). One study in an Ontario prison found that as many as 39% of inmates had no fixed address upon release (Vitelli, 1993).

A lack of support and discharge planning upon release from prison further contribute to homelessness and offending (Novac et al., 2006). From 1996 to 1998 nearly 3,000 individuals entered the shelter system in Toronto directly from a correctional facility (Springer, Mars, & Dennison, 1998). Former prisoners are among the heaviest users of shelter services and are generally in the shelter system for more than six months. They have a 30% chance of spending more than one year in a shelter (Springer et al., 1998).

Securing housing post-release has a significant impact on the ability of offenders to reintegrate into society. An early study by Banks and Fairfield (1976) found that 66% of the homeless ex-prisoners in their sample re-offended within 12 months of release contrasted with 22% of those who retained or acquired accommodation. Vitelli (1993) also found much higher rates of recidivism among people released from custody without housing.

Having served time in prison increases the likelihood of spending longer periods of time being homeless. Among homeless people, those who have been incarcerated are less likely to get off the street than those who have not served time in prison (Allgood & Warren, 2003). Time in detention erodes employability, family ties, and other defences against homelessness (Gowan, 2002).

Certain sub-groups are disproportionately vulnerable to post-incarceration homelessness, such as people with a diagnosis of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, poor literacy, severe mental illness, trauma-related brain injury, low intelligence, and those with a prior criminal record, addictions, or heavy drug use. Additional groups are Aboriginals, racialized groups (e.g., black males from the Caribbean and North Africa), refugees, women (particularly those involved in the sex trade), youth who have been in foster care, and transgender persons whose gender issues are often misunderstood or ignored (Novac et al., 2006).

A history of incarceration is even higher among rough sleepers who sleep in places considered unfit for habitation. The reason for this higher rate is not clear in the research literature; however the results are consistent (Novac et al., 2006). The 2003 Edmonton homelessness study found that about two-thirds of shelter-using homeless people had criminal records compared with 82% of rough sleepers (Gardiner & Cairns, 2004). The Mental Health Policy Research Group (1998) similarly found in Toronto that rough sleepers were more likely than shelter users to have been arrested, held overnight, convicted, and to have served prison sentences with higher frequency.

This scenario has prompted Laberge (2000) to refer to prisons as "homelessness factories". Programming and discharge planning is offered more frequently in federal correctional facilities compared with provincial jails which house inmates serving shorter sentences (up to two years less a day). But even a brief stay in jail may be long enough for an inmate to lose their housing, employment, social assistance benefits, and custody of their children (Novac et al., 2006).

This situation can be exacerbated by government policy changes. For example, changes in welfare policy and cutbacks in Ontario have ended welfare workers' visits to prisons to assist inmates in applying for benefits upon their release. Many prisoners are released without access to money for several days. Welfare files are closed within 30 days of inactivity, and when a file is closed an individual must reapply as a new applicant (Novac et al., 2006).

The lack of affordable housing in Canadian cities adds further barriers to securing accommodation post-release (Zorzi et al., 2006). In Canada, there are no services to help inmates retain their housing while incarcerated and most housing services are provided by community agencies that are largely over-burdened and under-funded (Zorzi et al., 2006).

Novac (2006) acknowledges the reciprocal risk factors of homelessness and incarceration: "Being homeless increases the odds of being jailed and being jailed increases the odds of being homeless." Many homeless persons are trapped in a revolving door between prison and the street (Kushel, Hahn, Evans, Bangsberg, & Moss, 2005).

Interactions with the police

Studies report the presence of both positive and negative interactions between homeless people and police. Gaetz (2002) conducted a study with 200 youth where one-third of participants told of supportive interactions with police. Police were said to be respectful and calming, they provided money, food and transportation, and they helped young people access shelters and other support agencies. However, in the same study, 53% of participants reported rude and abusive behaviour by police and 27% reported being assaulted by a police officer. This is an understudied issue in Canada (Novac et al., 2006).

The homeless are not likely to report victimization or offending to the police for several reasons. One includes a notion referred to as the "code of the street"; this is an unspoken loyalty to protect the homeless and not to tell on others who live on the street, and may occasionally be motivated by a fear of reprisal (Brassard & Cousineau, 2000). When police conduct is experienced by homeless people as abusive, this can create distrust and discourage reporting (Novac et al., 2006; Wachholz, 2005). Some homeless people have criminal records and will avoid reporting victimization so they do not attract unwanted police attention. Homeless youth are especially reluctant; they may fear police will not believe them, or they may have committed an illegal act at the time of the victimization, and choose not to report to police as a means of protecting themselves (Novac et al., 2006).

Finally, homeless people report that the escalation or "back-ending" of charges is a common experience (Novac et al., 2006). This occurs when youth, who may be defiant with police, are charged with

obstruction of justice in addition to the original offence. It is also common for intoxicated offenders who become aggressive to be charged with resisting arrest or attempted assault of a police officer (Novac et al., 2006).

Mental illness, homelessness, and criminal justice

In 2007, the Canadian Mental Health Association estimated that 30% of homeless people are mentally ill (Homelessness Action Group, 2007).[3] An early study by the Canadian Council on Social Development estimated in 1987 that 25,800 ex-psychiatric patients were passing through the shelter system (Hewitt, 1994). In an Ottawa study of people experiencing homelessness and staying in emergency shelters, 31% of the sample reported having been diagnosed by a health care professional with depression, 10% with bipolar disorder, and 5% had been diagnosed with schizophrenia or multiple conditions (Aubry et al., 2003). Regardless of the exact numbers, homeless persons suffer from high rates of mental illness (Hwang, 2000). Among the homeless population, those who report psychiatric illness or hospitalization are most likely to have a history of arrest or incarceration (Eberle et al., 2001).

Vitelli (1993) conducted a study of 110 men in a maximum-security jail in Ontario. He found that those who were homeless when arrested were more likely to display overt symptoms of mental illness, have a history of suicide attempts, report a history of using mental health services, and display overt psychiatric symptoms when admitted to custody. His study concluded that homeless people with severe mental illness are likely to end up in custody. A similar Vancouver study of 790 men admitted to a pre-trial facility over a 12 month period found that 36% of the homeless people detained were severely mentally disordered in contrast with 17% of the housed (Zaph, Roesch, & Hart, 1996). Homeless people with schizophrenia in Montreal also report having multiple involvements with the criminal justice system (Knowles, 2000).

A study by Belcher (1988) found that the mentally ill are often arrested not because they are dangerous, but for violations of social norms such as jaywalking, or for threatening or bizarre behaviour. Hewitt (1994) confirms that the mentally ill are at a greater risk of being arrested for minor infractions, and that police often have the perception that incarceration will provide access to medical and psychiatric services. However, jails are typically poorly equipped to deal with mentally ill people (Chaiklin, 2001). In addition, arrests or incarceration often interfere with the medication routines of the mentally ill which may lead to psychotic behaviour and a greater likelihood of being placed in segregation (Novac et al., 2006).

Some argue that jails are being used to substitute punishment for treatment following widespread deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill (Aderibigbe, 1997; Belcher, 1988; Hewitt, 1994; Knowles, 2000; Novac et al., 2006). Court diversion programs are being developed in some jurisdictions across North America to address this issue (Hartford et al., 2004).

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3   Novac et al. (2006) suggests that estimates of mental illness among the homeless may be exaggerated. This position is based on the fact that the majority of studies focus on unaccompanied homeless adults. Rates of mental illness among homeless families are quite low, and including this population in the statistics would likely lower the rates of mental illness in the overall homeless population.

Mental health problems among the homeless often coexist with other challenges. Concurrent disorders are a combination of mental health problems and substance abuse problems (Gaetz, 2004). An American study of 529 homeless adults found that those with a previous psychiatric hospitalization were the least likely to sleep at an emergency shelter, were more likely to sleep rough, had been homeless twice as long as the rest of the sample, used drugs and alcohol the most, and were the most involved in criminal activities (Gelberg, Linn, & Leake, 1988). Individuals suffering from concurrent disorders may have considerable difficulty maintaining employment and housing, and require considerable supports (Gaetz, 2004).

Alternatives to incarceration for homeless people with mental illness are possible. Culhane, Metraux, and Hadley (2001) found that homeless people with severe mental illness placed in supportive housing experienced marked reductions in shelter use, incarceration, hospitalizations, and length of stay per hospitalization. They also estimated that 95% of costs of supportive housing with this population were recovered by collateral service reductions attributable to housing placement. Similarly, Tsemberis, Gulcur and Nakae (2004) have demonstrated that the provision of regular housing with intensive support and financial assistance can assist people with concurrent disorders and chronic histories of homelessness to achieve stable housing.

VI. OFFENCES COMMITTED BY HOMELESS PEOPLE

A number of studies have explored common profiles of homeless people who have been caught up in the criminal justice system:

- Homeless persons are less likely to be charged with violent offences, and more likely to be charged with property-related offences, such as those which meet their survival needs (Gowan, 2002; Novac et al., 2006).
- They are frequently charged with violations of municipal by-laws, such as loitering, noise, and panhandling (Eberle et al., 2001).
- Crimes of the homeless are also more visible because of their limited access to private places and may more easily attract police attention (Eberle et al., 2001; Hewitt, 1994).

Several risk factors have been associated with involvement in criminal offending including the length of time individuals are homeless and their exposure to criminal activity, peer pressure, as well as substance abuse and mental illness (Eberle et al., 2001; Hewitt, 1994; Novac et al., 2006).

Hickey (2002) has outlined common links between criminal offending and homelessness:

- Being homeless can lead to criminal activity (e.g., vagrancy, larceny, drug offences), followed by imprisonment;

- When released from prison, individuals can immediately become homeless again, followed by further criminal activity; and,
- Three main reasons for re-offending include addictions, coping with independent living after institutionalization, and fractured family relationships.

Fischer (1992) reported that the prevalence of assault committed by homeless persons was higher than the rates of assault committed by the general population. Assaults can result in knife and gun-shot wounds, burns, and fractures. There is evidence that homeless persons assault each other at higher rates in shelters than on the streets. Shelter users may fight for possessions, and bully each other within this context. In addition, trauma is one of the leading causes of death and disability among homeless people, which is often inflicted by other homeless persons.

Some studies suggest that homeless people may occasionally commit minor crimes in order to obtain shelter or temporary asylum, especially during the winter months as a method to escape the cold (Eberle et al., 2001). More research is required to develop a better understanding of this occurrence.

Drug-related crime

A large number of homeless people are addicted to alcohol and illicit substances (Fischer, 1992; Hwang, 2000). In an Ottawa study of homelessness, 29% of participants self-reported abusing alcohol, and 40% reported abusing illegal drugs. Youth rates of substance abuse were particularly high: 56% of female youth, and 68% of male youth reported drug use problems. Adults were significantly more likely to report having injected drugs (Aubry et al., 2003). Similar results have been reported in studies across Canada (Eberle et al., 2001; Gaetz 2004; Palermo et al., 2006).

Many homeless persons are involved in purchasing and selling drugs, although they are not likely to be major drug traffickers (Fischer, 1992). Larger-scale drug trafficking can be quite lucrative and traffickers are not likely to be homeless. Nonetheless, homeless drug users are often arrested for possession of illegal drugs (Fischer, 1992). Drug habits can be very costly and difficult to maintain on a low or unstable income. Consequently, many homeless people engage in illegal activities to secure money for drugs (Fischer, 1992). Homeless substance and drug users are more likely to commit property crimes, violent offences, and engage in selling drugs than the general homeless population (Shelter Cymru, 2004; Gaetz, 2004).

Drug detoxification and treatment programs in many cities have long waiting lists and are difficult to access. Furthermore, the results of treatment are generally short lived when clients are released to the streets without stable housing (Novac et al., 2006).

Criminal offending by homeless youth

Homeless youth are more likely than housed youth to have been involved in criminal activity before leaving home and after becoming homeless (Eberle et al., 2001). McCarthy and Hagan (1991) found that the rate of criminal activity by youth increased after they became homeless compared to when they lived at home. Once homeless, youth may commit crime to obtain money, for excitement, or to deal with boredom (Eberle et al., 2001).

It is common for homeless youth to have had out-of-home residential placements during childhood, whether through a child protection service, residential school, or correctional centre (Eberle et al., 2001; Novac et al., 2006; Aubry et al., 2003). In a study of homelessness in Ottawa, 61% of male youth and 35% of female youth reported spending time in a prison, detention centre or correctional centre. Forty-six percent of male youth, and 35% of female youth had lived in group homes (Aubry et al., 2003).

Tanner and Wortley (2002) conducted a study of 3,400 youth in high school and 400 homeless youth. The homeless youth reported higher levels in all offence categories, including violent offences. Homeless females in the study were about as likely to commit offences as the males. McCarthy and Hagan (1992) also found that homeless youth in Toronto reported committing more crimes, and more serious crimes on average than their peers who were still in school.

In a 1995 study, McCarthy found that three-quarters of homeless youth in Toronto were involved in serious delinquent activities. They reported

stealing, burglary, and having been incarcerated. Theft of food, theft of property valued at over $50, shoplifting, smoking marijuana, and other drug use were common offences (McCarthy & Hagan, 1992). An additional study in 2002 found that homeless male youth were more likely than females to have committed theft or to have been jailed, while homeless female youth were more likely to have been involved in prostitution (McCarthy & Hagan, 2002). Gaetz (2002) also found that 44% of homeless youth carry their possessions at all times to protect themselves against theft and 28% carry a weapon to protect themselves against threats of violence.

McCarthy and Hagan (2002) found that the lack of secure shelter and length of time on the street were both predictors of criminal activity, drug use, prostitution, and incarceration. Youth whose peers were involved in criminal activity learned from them and were more likely to commit offences regardless of housing status, registration in school, or previous criminal history. Street youth have also been found to commit a disproportionate amount of all crime and are likely to be repeat offenders (Eberle et al., 2001).

O'Grady (1998) found that a social welfare model for youth that focuses on providing shelter and other support services reduces opportunities for youth to become involved in crime. Employment has also been found to be an effective way to help youth leave the street (Eberle et al., 2001; O'Grady, 1998).

Municipal bylaws and ticketing

A Montreal study concluded that the use of municipal bylaws to regulate the behaviour of homeless people within the city had contributed to a four-fold rise in the number of tickets issued to homeless persons by the police and transit security officers from 1994 to 2004. In total, 22,685 tickets had been issued over the ten year period. In 72% of cases, the individuals convicted were sent to jail for their inability to pay the fine (Bellot, Raffestin, Royer, & Noël, 2005). An article in the Montreal newspaper Le Devoir (April 16, 2007) revealed that homeless persons in Montreal owed over $3.3 million in unpaid fines to the city. One 50-year old man had received 216 tickets in the previous two years, 136 of them for being found asleep on a city transit bench. He owed the city $43,915 in fines and late fees (Cauchy, 2007).

The largest proportion of tickets (20%) are given for sleeping or being spread out on a bench or on the ground in a public space (Bellot, Chesnay, & Royer, 2007). Other commonly ticketed offences include drunkenness or consumption of alcohol in public places, being on public transit without paying, and disrupting the free flow of pedestrians (Bellot et al., 2007).

Some argue that the increased commercialization and privatization of public space has contributed to this process of criminalization (Novac et al., 2006). Surveillance and private security guards prohibit undesirable people from occupying these private spaces (Novac et al., 2006). The Montreal study shows that ticketing by private transit authorities tripled between 2003 and 2005 (Bellot et al., 2007). Similar research has begun in Toronto and Ottawa.

As less and less public space is available to the poor and homeless, it becomes more difficult for them to accomplish essential daily tasks. This trend may lead to further criminalization and increased ticketing for non-compliance (Wachholz, 2005).

VII.   HOMELESSNESS AS PUBLIC DISORDER

"Clean up the streets, throw them in jail. I have the right to not be bothered at all."
~ A quote from a reader responding to a Globe and Mail article about panhandlers in Toronto (August 18, 2007).

Political responses to homelessness have tended to rely on the criminal justice system and often employ police and prisons as primary solutions (Novac et al., 2006). One example is the Safe Streets Act (SSA) enacted by the government of Ontario in 2000 to control aggressive panhandling, and to deal with "squeegee kids". Interestingly, a similar law was repealed by the City of Winnipeg after an appeal in the Superior Court of Justice (Manitoba) recognized the right of the poor to use public space (Novac et al., 2006). Although the SSA in Ontario has been challenged, the Superior Court of Justice (Ontario) has yet to overturn the legislation.

Bright and O'Grady (2002) are concerned that the use of the SSA in Toronto has given police the power to displace young squeegee workers from downtown locations where they have access to essential services. They also predict that outlawing income generation through squeegee work may inadvertently contribute to an increase in more serious offences by homeless youth. The implementation of the SSA has contributed to strained relations between homeless youth and the police (Bright & O'Grady, 2002).

This reinforces the notion that the nature of homelessness is not well understood by certain segments of the public, which can lead to a lack of tolerance:

> As more people get forced out on the street by government policies such as decreased welfare rates and fewer supports for ex-offenders and the mentally ill, the public has become increasingly intolerant of even mildly antisocial behaviour. Business people say that street people are "bad for business" and clamour for city bylaws to "round up" the poor who sleep on park benches and who beg on main shopping streets. Local residents call for strict enforcement and prosecution of laws and bylaws against panhandling, soliciting for purposes of prostitution, loitering, public drinking and disturbing the peace (National Council of Welfare, 2000, p. 16-17).

This quote from the National Council of Welfare expresses in large measure the underlying public response to homelessness; however, many members of the public also adopt a humanitarian approach. In February 2007, the total number of recorded deaths due to homelessness in Toronto rose to 504. A recent survey in Toronto found that 8 in 10 residents thought homelessness should be a major or moderate local government priority. Close to half

want more shelters and two-thirds said they would allow one in their neighbourhood (Homelessness Action Group, 2007).

The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (2007) has also been responding to homelessness in American cities in a proactive manner. Rather than funding programs that endlessly serve the homeless, many cities are now developing 10-year plans to end homelessness based on research about effective solutions, which includes the Housing First approach.

VIII. ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS

This report concludes with actionable recommendations that follow from what is known about the links between homelessness, victimization, offending, and incarceration. These are multi-faceted issues and, consequently, the recommendations span a large range of sectors. The recommendations were developed in consultation with the Municipal Network on Crime Prevention, city housing authorities, academic researchers, service providers, and community action groups on homelessness from Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Regina, Calgary, Edmonton, and Vancouver.

The recommendations have been grouped into three categories to respond to the main findings in the literature review: (1) housing and supports; (2) homelessness and victimization; and, (3) homelessness and crime. Each section will restate the general problems that form the basis for the recommendations.

The charts present recommendations in the first column and the order of government responsible in the second column. M stands for Municipal government, P for Provincial Government, F for Federal Government. Other relevant groups are mentioned by name, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the police, or legal aid.

Housing and supports

As the literature has demonstrated, homelessness is linked with rates of offending and victimization; those without shelter are more likely to be victimized, and more likely to engage in survival crimes (Novac et al., 2006). Providing housing, and social and income supports to end homelessness are the best approaches for addressing crime and victimization associated with homelessness. This is consistent with the Housing First approach advocated by Phillip Mangano and used in several cities across the United States (Tsemberis et al., 2004). The Housing First approach is also being advocated in a number of cities across Canada. Large-scale initiatives of this nature require the cooperation and resources of all orders of government.

The recommendations in this section include the provision of housing and advocacy for homeless people, increases in social assistance and minimum wage and general recommendations to invest more resources at all levels into strategic tools to measure and reduce homelessness in Canada.

Recommendations	Responsibility
Housing and Advocacy	
• Increase the availability of affordable housing.	M/P/F
• Develop a national Housing First programme in partnership with provinces and municipalities to share responsibilities and resources.	M/P/F
• Develop municipal homelessness prevention strategies that include services such as rental subsidies for low-income individuals at risk of losing their housing.	M
• Build supportive and transitional housing units that offer low-cost accommodation and provide sustainable funding for on-site social services and resources.	M/P/F
• Provide on-site housing advice, advocacy and legal assistance to homeless individuals at shelters, soup kitchens, and other emergency services.	NGOs/Academic/Legal Aid/ Social Services
• Develop a continuum of care for those leaving the shelter system that supports individuals to meet basic needs and regain housing stability.	NGO/Academic/ Social Services
Social Assistance and Minimum Wage	
• Raise levels of social assistance and minimum wage.	P
• Assist those in prison to apply for social assistance so they have support when released.	P
• Work to reduce barriers to employment experienced by former offenders.	P
General	
• Provide sustainable core funding to effective programs at a rate consistent with inflation.	M/P/F
• Demonstrate leadership on reducing homelessness, set actionable reduction targets based on homelessness indicators, and develop long-term housing strategies.	M/P/F
• Support and increase inter-sectoral coordination and collaboration.	M/P/F
• Facilitate national interdisciplinary conferences on homelessness.	P/F
• Upgrade the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) to a data collection tool to be used for research on homelessness in Canada. Provide additional resources to service providers for its implementation.	F/P

Homelessness and victimization

As this report has demonstrated, victimization through family violence and spousal assault are significant risk factors for homelessness, and those without adequate shelter are more likely than the housed to experience victimization. Large portions of homeless youth have spent time in custody, either through correctional or child welfare services or both (Aubry et al., 2003; Novac et al., 2006). Youth are often released without adequate planning and support to find appropriate housing, or without having received adequate care for a history of victimization. Aboriginal people and homeless people who experience mental illness are also overrepresented in Canadian prisons (Gardiner & Cairns, 2004; Gaetz, 2004).

Recommendations in this area include improved release mechanisms and victim assistance for youth in care; educational initiatives to teach life skills and educate the public; improved mental health services; and, investment in the prevention of family violence and violence against women.

Recommendations	Responsibility
Youth in Care	
• Improved discharge planning for youth in care, and improved supports post-release, with the option to return to care for youth who have chosen to leave early.	P
• Provide victim assistance for youth who have suffered from violence.	P
• Review child welfare policy surrounding the age of maturity and the impact this may have on vulnerability to homelessness.	P
• Provide more life skills training, housing literacy, income support for independent living, advice and decision-making supports for youth at the point in which they leave the child welfare system.	P
• Develop transitional and supportive housing options for youth with special needs which may impede their transition into adulthood.	M/P/F
Education	
• Invest in programs to help youth attend and stay in school.	P/School Boards
• Implement programs aimed at preventing family and interpersonal violence in school curricula.	P/School Boards
• Provide life skills training to at-risk children and youth.	P/School Boards
• Provide alternative education tailored for young adults excluded from schools apart from traditional adult high schools.	
• Provide public education that challenges prejudices about homeless people.	Media/ NGOsAcademics
• Provide increased academic support and family life supports for children and youth in family shelters.	M/P/Service Providers

Recommendations	Responsibility
Mental Health	
• Develop more community supports for people with severe and persistent mental illness who are isolated in the community.	P
• Work with the housing sector to ensure that more people with severe and persistent mental illness are housed and receive the necessary supports in the community.	P
• Improve coordination between the mental health system, social services, and the justice system to reduce reliance on justice sanctions to intervene with the mentally ill.	P/F
• Rather than incarceration, provide appropriate treatment for people with severe and persistent mental illness.	P/F
• Develop more mental health services for young adults and more accessibility to services for individuals with concurrent disorders.	M/P/F
• Maintain continuity of service and medication in and out of custody.	P
Prevention of Family Violence and Violence Against Women	
• Since family violence and violence against women are known risk factors that contribute to the homelessness of youth, women and children, investments should be made in programs that: - Prevent child abuse and neglect; - Prevent intimate partner violence; and - Facilitate early intervention in at-risk families	M/P/F/NGOs

Homelessness and crime

The research alluded to in this report suggests that homeless individuals are more likely than the housed population to engage in criminal activity, to be arrested for breaches of municipal bylaws, and to be sentenced to custody for minor offences (Gowan, 2002; Bellot et al., 2005; Clarke & Cooper, 2002). It has also been found that many individuals experience homelessness for the first time following release from prison, homeless people who use drugs are more likely to engage in crime and experience victimization and many homeless people have had negative interactions with police officers (Springer, Mars & Dennison, 1998; Fischer, 1992; Gaetz, 2002).

The recommendations below deal with training for enforcement personnel, improved drug policy, standards for corrections and release from custody, and legislation.

Recommendations	Responsibility
Enforcement	
• Provide training for local police and private security on best practices when intervening with homeless persons.	M/P/Academics/ Service Providers
• Develop alternatives to traditional punitive responses, such as ticketing homeless individuals for breaking municipal bylaws. Use bylaw intervention as opportunity to make referrals to community services.	Police/Private Security
• Provide victim assistance to homeless persons who report crimes, and work to improve relations with homeless people to improve reporting rates.	Police/NGOs
Drug Policy	
• Develop comprehensive municipal drug strategies such as the four-pillar approach used in Vancouver: prevention, treatment, harm reduction and enforcement. Ensure each part of the strategy is funded and implemented.	M/P
• Acknowledge the interconnectedness of housing and substance abuse.	P/Service Providers
• Ensure all patients released from drug treatment programs will be housed.	P
• Increase availability of traditional detoxification and treatment centres, as well as innovative culturally relevant treatment programs.	P
• Develop specialized drug courts that also partner with community agencies for mental health, housing and other services, and create interventions that meet the diverse needs of individuals.	P/M
• Make addictions counselling available in all provincial institutions.	P
• Increase the availability of lifestyle change approaches, such as supported employment programs.	NGOs/P

Recommendations	Responsibility
Corrections	
• Offer discharge planning that recognizes the importance of stable housing for all offenders leaving prison as well as those held on remand.	P/F
• Provide transitional housing for offenders released into the community with nowhere to go. Women have different safety needs and may not feel secure in transitional housing; consider other appropriate options.	P/F
• Work with provincial child welfare services to reconnect families where children have been taken from their mothers.	P
• Coordinate with housing and social assistance to ensure offenders continue to receive benefits once released from custody, or during custody if supporting family members.	P/F
• Ensure belongings of homeless people are not discarded while incarcerated; establish storage units for those in custody and assist with the safe placement and recovery of property.	P/Police
• Assist inmates to obtain missing identification cards and personal documentation.	P/Police
• Reduce the use of incarceration for minor incivilities and breaches of municipal bylaws.	M/P
Legislation	
• Repeal legislation that targets individuals living in poverty such as the *Safe Streets Act* in Ontario and the *Safe Schools Act* which excludes youth with behaviour problems from mainstream education.	P
• Introduce sentencing reforms that require judges to consider alternatives to custody when sentencing offenders who are homeless.	F/P

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